

TENNESSEE REGULATORY AUTHORITY



460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0505

Before the Federal Communications Commission Washington D.C.

In the Matter of

Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization)	WC Docket No. 11-42
)	
Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service)	CC Docket No. 96-45
)	
Lifeline and Link-Up)	WC Docket No. 03-109
)	
Advancing Broadband Availability Through Digital Literacy Training)	WC Docket No. 12-23
)	

Comments of the Tennessee Regulatory Authority

The Tennessee Regulatory Authority (“TRA”) respectfully submits these comments in response to the Federal Communications Commission’s (“FCC”) Public Notice issued on March 9, 2012¹ concerning the Petition for Waiver and Clarification of Lifeline Reform Order (“*Petition*”).² In the *Petition*, USTelecom and several other associations representing local exchange carriers request that the FCC waive for “post-paid ETCs” the effective date of several rules established in the recent *Lifeline Reform*

¹ DA 12-387.

² Petition for Waiver and Clarification of the United States Telecom Association, the Independent Telephone and Telecommunications Alliance, the National Telecommunications Cooperative Association, the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies, the Western Telecommunications Alliance, and the Eastern Rural Telecom Association, WC Dkt. Nos. 11-42 *et al.* CC Dkt. No. 95-45 (filed Mar. 9, 2012).

Order.³ Specifically, the petitioners request that the Commission waive, with respect to “post-paid ETCs,” the April 2, 2012 effective date for: (1) the establishment of the new flat-rate Lifeline reimbursement amount for subscribers on non-Tribal lands; (2) the elimination of Link Up discounts on non-Tribal lands and (3) changes to the Link Up discount on Tribal lands.⁴ The petitioners request that the effective dates for these requirements be extended until October 1, 2012.⁵

The TRA held a workshop concerning implementation of the *Lifeline Reform Order* on March 19, 2012. The consensus of the industry members at the workshop was that the April 2, 2012 effective date for elements of the *Lifeline Reform Order* should be delayed. Echoing the concerns of the industry workshop participants, the TRA is concerned that the short implementation time frame established by the FCC is difficult, if not impossible, to comply with given the time necessary for state tariffing and notification requirements. Aside from regulatory considerations, the short time frame creates undue hardship on carriers to implement changes to their business processes and billing systems that support Lifeline customers. Finally, the TRA is concerned that there has been inadequate time to educate consumers about the changes to the Lifeline program that will potentially impact their rates and terms of service. All of these factors lead the TRA to support the *Petition* with respect to its request to delay implementation of requirements of the *Lifeline Reform Order*.

³ *Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization et al.*, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, WC Dkt. Nos. 11-42 *et al.*, CC Dkt. No. 96-45, FCC 12-11 (rel. Feb. 6, 2012) (*Lifeline Reform Order*).

⁴ *Petition* at 7-8.

⁵ *Id.* at 8.

Dated: March 20, 2012

Respectfully submitted,

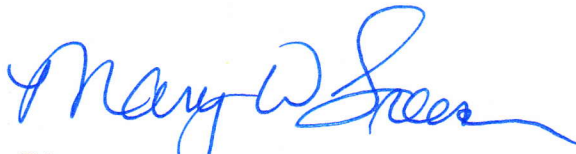
The Tennessee Regulatory Authority



Chairman Kenneth C. Hill



Director Sara Kyle



Director Mary W. Freeman